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Proposal for a programme of action for nuclear weapons

Introduction

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Effective measures for nuclear disarmament and the elimination of the threat of nuclear war have been accorded the highest priority by the international community. The post Cold War era provides an unprecedented opportunity to establish a new system of international security based on the immutable principles of the United Nations Charter. Rationalisations for the continued possession of nuclear weapons need to be discarded. So long as the role of the nuclear weapons in the context of security is not delegitimised and existing nuclear doctrines not abandoned, there will always be a threat of a resumption of the nuclear arms race and the escalation of the nuclear threat.

It is therefore incumbent to ensure that existing favourable circumstances in the international relations are utilised in order to translate the objectives of eliminating all nuclear weapons from a rhetorical goal into a living reality. This requires active multilateral efforts to identify, negotiate and implement specific, step by step measures for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons dated 8 July 1996, has established that the unique characterstics of nuclear weapons, and in particular their destructive capacity, their capacity to cause untold human suffering, and their ability to cause damage to generations to come, render them potentially catastrophic. According to the Court, "The destructive power of nuclear weapons cannot be contained in either space or time. They have the potential to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet".

The International Court of Justice concluded that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflicts, and in particular the principles of and rules of humanitarian law and stated that there exists an obligation for all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

As stated in its declaration of 28 March 1996 to the Plenary of the Conference on Disarmament, the Group of 21 has persistently pressed for commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on nuclear disarmament, an objective which has been accorded the highest priority by the international community. It will be recalled that on 14 March 1996 the Group of 21 put a decision before the Conference for adoption (CD/1388), through which the Conference would establish an Ad-hoc Committee on nuclear disarmament "to commence negotiations on a phased programme for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time", as requested by General Assembly Resolution 50/70 P.

This programme to be carried out by the Ad-hoc Committee could include the following steps and measures, as a basis for its work. The list of measures in each phase is indicative and not exhaustive, and the order in which they are mentioned does not necessarily reflect priority. Nevertheless, it is to be understood that in any programme for nuclear disarmament all measures and steps to be taken are inextricably bound to each other.

Programme of action

First Phase.- 1996 - 2000

A. **Measures aimed at reducing the nuclear threat.**

- Immediate and concurrent commencement of negotiations and early conclusion of:

  - a multilaterally negotiated legally binding instrument to assure non-nuclear weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;

  - a convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;

  - a treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons; and

  - a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

- End the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, by agreements on:

  - Cessation of all nuclear weapon tests and closure of all nuclear weapon test sites; and

  - Measures to prevent the use of new technologies for the upgrading of existing nuclear weapons systems, including the prohibition of nuclear weapon research and development.

- Full implementation of the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba, and South-East Asia and establishment of additional nuclear weapons free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned.

- Declarations of the stocks of nuclear weapons and of nuclear weapons usable material.

B. Measures of nuclear disarmament.

- Stand down nuclear-weapon systems from a state of operational readiness.

- Preservation of the ABM (Anti-ballistic missiles) Treaty.

- Moratorium and prohibition on testing of outer space weapons systems.

- Ratification and implementation of the START II Treaty.

- Commencement and conclusion of negotiations on further reductions of nuclear arsenals (START III).

- Placement under IAEA safeguards of nuclear fissile material transferred from military to peaceful uses by the nuclear weapons States.

- Further negotiations for nuclear disarmament by all nuclear weapon States, including the cessation of production of nuclear warheads.

- Recommendation to the General Assembly to declare the decade 2000-2010 as the "Decade for nuclear disarmament".

Second Phase.- 2000 - 2010

Measures to reduce the nuclear arsenals and to promote confidence between States.

- Entry into force of the treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons and establishment of a single integrated multilateral comprehensive verification system to ensure compliance, including measures such as:

  - Separation of nuclear warheads from their delivery vehicles;

  - Placement of nuclear warheads in secure storage under international supervision leading to the removal of special nuclear materials from warheads; and

  - Transfer of nuclear materials including fissile materials and delivery vehicles to peaceful purposes.

- Preparation under international auspices of an inventory of nuclear arsenals, including fissile materials, nuclear warheads and their delivery vehicles.

- Progressive and balanced reduction of missiles intended for carrying nuclear warheads.

- Recommendation to the General Assembly to declare the decade 2010 - 2020 as the "Decade for the total elimination of nuclear weapons".

Third Phase.- 2010 - 2020

Consolidation of a Nuclear Weapon Free World.

- Adoption of principles and mechanisms for a global cooperative security system.

- Full implementation of the treaty to eliminate all nuclear weapons and of its verification regime through the completion of further measures such as:

  - Conversion of all facilities devoted to the production of nuclear weapons to peaceful purposes;

  - Application of safeguards on nuclear facilities on a universal basis; and

  - Elimination of all nuclear weapons.